



THE
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,

CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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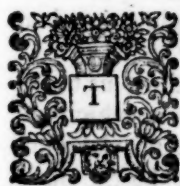
THURSDAY, May 15, 1755.

— Nunc et campus, et aræ,

Lenæque sub noctem susurri

Compositâ repetantur horâ.

HOR.



THE various seasons of the year produce not a greater alteration in the face of nature, than in the polite manner of passing our time. The diversions of winter and summer are as different as the dog-days and those at *Christmas*; nor do I know any genteel amusement, except Gaming, that prevails during the whole year. As the long days are now coming on, the theatrical gentry, who contribute to dissipate the gloom of our winter evenings, begin to divide themselves into strolling companies; and are packing up their tragedy wardrobes, together with a sufficient quantity of thunder and lightning, for the delight and amazement of the country. In the mean time the several public Gardens near this metropolis are trimming their trees, levelling their walks, and burnishing their lamps, for our reception. At *Vaux-ball* (which is already opened) the artificial ruins are repaired; the cascade is made to spout with several additional streams of block-tin;

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and they have touched up all the pictures, which were damaged last season by the fingering of those curious Connoisseurs, who could not be satisfied without *feeling* whether the figures were alive. The magazine at *Cuper's*, I am told, is furnished with an extraordinary supply of gunpowder, to be shot off in squibs and sky-rockets, or whirled away in blazing suns and *Catherine* wheels. And it is not to be doubted, in case of a war, but that *Neptune* and all his *Tritons* will assist the *British* navy; and as we before took *Porto-Bello* and *Cape Breton*, we shall gain new victories over the *French* fleet every night upon that canal.

HAPPY are they, who can muster up sufficient, at least to hire tickets at the door, once or twice in a season! Not that these pleasures are confined to the rich and the great only; for the lower sort of people have their *Ranelaghs* and their *Vaux-halls* as well as the quality. *Perrot's* inimitable Grotto may be seen for only calling for a pot of beer; and the royal diversion of duck-hunting, may be had into the bargain, together with a decanter of *Dorchester*, for your six-pence at *Jenny's Whim*. Every skittle-alley half a mile out of town is embellished with green arbours and shady retreats; where the company is generally entertained with the melodious scraping of a blind fiddler. And who can resist the luscious temptation of a fine juicy ham, or a delicious buttock of beef stuffed with parsley, accompanied with a foaming decanter of sparkling home-brew'd, which is so invitingly painted at the entrance of almost every village ale-house?

OUR Northern climate will not, indeed, allow us to indulge ourselves in all those pleasures of a garden, which are so feelingly described by our poets. We dare not lay ourselves on the damp ground in shady groves, or by the purling stream, but are obliged to fortify our insides against the cold by good substantial eating and drinking. For this reason the extreme costliness of the provisions at our public Gardens has been grievously complained of by those gentry, to whom a supper at these places is as necessary a part of the entertainment as the singing or the fireworks. Poor Mr. *John* sees with an heavy heart the profits of a whole week's card-money devoured in tarts and cheese-cakes by Mrs. House-keeper or Mrs. Lady's own Woman: and the substantial cit, who comes from behind the counter two or three evenings in the summer, can never enough regret the thin wafer-like slices of beef and ham, that taste of nothing but the knife.

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I WAS greatly diverted last Saturday evening at *Vaux-hall* with the shrewd remarks made on this very head by an honest citizen; whose wife and two daughters had, I found, prevailed on him to carry them to the Garden. As I thought there was something curious in their behaviour, I went into the next box to them, where I had an opportunity of seeing and over-hearing every thing that past.

AFTER some talk,—“Come, come, (said the old don) it is high time, I think, to go to supper.” To this the ladies readily assented; and one of the misses said, “do let us have a chick, papa.” “Zounds (said the father) they are half a crown a-piece, and no bigger than a sparrow.” Here the old lady took him up — “You are so stingy, Mr. *Rose*, there is no bearing you. When one is out upon pleasure, I love to appear like somebody: and what signifies a few shillings once and away, when a body is about it?” This reproof so effectually silenced the old gentleman, that the youngest miss had the courage to put in a word for some ham likewise: Accordingly the waiter was called, and dispatched by the old lady with an order for a chicken and a plate of ham. When it was brought, our honest cit twirled the dish about three or four times, and surveyed it with a very settled countenance; then taking up the slice of ham, and dangling it to and fro on the end of his fork, asked the waiter, “how much there was of it.” “A shilling’s worth, Sir,” said the fellow. “—Prithee, said the don, how much dost think it weighs?” “—An ounce?—A shilling an ounce! that is sixteen shillings *per* pound!—A reasonable profit truly!—Let me see—suppose now the whole ham weighs thirty pounds:—at a shilling *per* ounce, that is, sixteen shillings *per* pound, why your master makes exactly twenty-four pounds of every ham; and if he buys them at the best hand, and salts them and cures them himself, they don’t stand him in ten shillings a-piece.” The old lady bade him hold his nonsense, declared herself ashamed for him, and asked him if people must not live: then taking a coloured handkerchief from her own neck, she tucked it into his shirt-collar, whence it hung like a bib, and helped him to a leg of the chicken. The old gentleman, at every bit he put in his mouth, amused himself with saying, — “there goes two-pence—there goes three-pence—there goes a groat.—Zounds a man at these places should not have a swallow so wide as a tom-tit.”

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THIS scanty repast, we may imagine, was soon dispatched; and it was with much difficulty our citizen was prevailed on to suffer a plate of beef to be ordered. This too was no less admired, and underwent the same comments with the ham: at length, when only a very small bit was left, as they say, for manners in the dish, our don took a piece of an old newspaper out of his pocket, and gravely wrapping up the meat in it placed it carefully in his letter case. "I'll keep thee as a curiosity to my dying day; and I'll show thee to my neighbour *Horseman*, and ask him if he can make as much of his stakes." Then rubbing his hands, and shrugging up his shoulders, "Why now, says he, to-morrow night I may eat as much cold beef as I can stuff in any tavern in *London*, and pay nothing for it." A dish of tarts, cheesecakes and custards next made their appearance at the request of the young ladies, who paid no sort of regard to the father's remonstrance, "that they were four times as dear as at the pastry-cook's."

SUPPER being ended, madam put her spouse in mind to call for wine.—"We *must* have some wine, my dear, or we shall not be looked upon, you know." "Well, well," says the don, that's right enough. But do they sell their liquor too by the ounce?—"Here, drawer, what wine have you got?" The fellow, who by this time began to smoke his guests, answered—"We have exceeding good *French* wine of all sorts, and please your honour. Would your honour have a bottle of Champagne, or Burgundy, or Claret, or?"—"No, no, none of your wishy-washy outlandish rot-gut for me:" interrupted the citizen.—"A tankard of the Alderman beats all the red Claret wine in the *French* king's cellar.—But come, bring us a bottle of sound old Port; and d'ye hear? let it be good."

WHILE the waiter was gone, the good man most sadly lamented, that he could not have his pipe; which the wife would by no means allow, "because (she said) it was ungentle to smoke, where there were any ladies in company." When the wine came, our citizen gravely took up the bottle, and holding it above his head, "Aye, aye, said he, the bottom has had a good kick—And mind how confoundedly it is warped on the sides.—Not above five gills, I warrant.—An old foldier at the *Jerusalem* would beat two of them.—But let us see how it is brew'd." He then poured out a glass; and after holding it up before the candle, smelling to it,

it, sipping it twice or thrice, and smacking with his lips, drank it off: but declaring that second thoughts were best, he filled another bumper; and tossing that off, after some pause, with a very important air, ventured to pronounce it drinkable. The ladies, having also drank a glass round, affirmed it was very good, and felt warm in the stomach: and even the old gentleman relaxed into such good humour by the time the bottle was emptied, that out of his own free will and motion he most generously called for another pint, but charged the waiter "to pick out an honest one."

WHILE the glass was thus circulating, the family amused themselves by making observations on the Garden. The citizen expressed his wonder at the number of lamps, and said it must cost a great deal of money every night to light them all: the eldest miss declared, that for her part she liked the Dark Walk best of all, because it was *solentary*: little miss thought the last song mighty pretty, and said she would buy it, if she could but remember the tune: and the old lady observed, that there was a great deal of good company indeed; but the gentlemen were so rude, that they perfectly put her out of countenance by staring at her through their spy-glasses. In a word, the tarts, the cheesecakes, the beef, the chicken, the ounce of ham, and every thing, seemed to have been quite forgot, till the dismal moment approached, that the reckoning was called for. As this solemn business concerns only the gentlemen, the ladies kept a profound silence; and when the terrible account was brought, they left the paymaster undisturbed to enjoy the misery by himself: only the old lady had the hardiness to squint at the sum total, and declared "it was pretty reasonable *considering*."

OUR citizen bore his misfortunes with a tolerable degree of patience: he shook his head as he run over every article, and swore he would never buy meat by the ounce again. At length, when he had carefully summed up every figure, he bade the drawer bring change for six-pence: then pulling out a leathern purse from a snug pocket in the inside of his waistcoat, he drew out slowly, piece by piece, thirteen shillings; which he regularly placed in two rows upon the table. When the change was brought, after counting it very carefully, he laid down four half-pence in the same exact order; then calling the waiter,—“there, says he, there’s your “damage—thirteen and two-pence—And hearkye, there’s “three-pence over for yourself.” The remaining penny he

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put into his coat-pocket; and chinking it—"this, says he, will serve me to-morrow to buy a paper of tobacco."

THE family now prepared themselves for going; and as there were some slight drops of rain, madam buttoned up the old gentleman's coat, that he might not spoil his laced waistcoat, and made him flap his hat, over which she tied his pocket handkerchief, to save his wig: and as the coat itself, (she said) had never been worn but three Sundays, she even parted with her own Cardinal, and spread it the wrong side out over his shoulders. In these accoutrements he sallied forth, accompanied by his wife with her upper petticoat thrown over her head, and his daughters with the skirts of their gowns turned up, and their heads muffled up in coloured handkerchiefs. I followed them quite out of the Garden; and as they were waiting for their hack to draw up, the youngest miss asked, "When shall we come again, papa?"—"Come again? (said he) what a pox would you ruin me?" "Once in one's life is enough; and I think I have done very handsome. Why it would not have cost me above fourpence half-penny to have spent my evening at *Sots Hole*: and what with the cursed coach hire, and all together, here's almost a pound gone, and nothing to show for it." "Fye, Mr. Rose, I am quite ashamed for you," replies the old lady. "You are always grudging me and your girls the least bit of pleasure: and you cannot help grumbling, if we do but go to *Little Hornsey* to drink tea. I am sure; now they are women grown up, they ought to see a little of the world;—and they SHALL." The old don was not willing to pursue the argument any further; and the coach coming up, he was glad to put an end to the dispute by saying,—"Come, come, let us make haste, wife; or we shall not get home time enough to have my best wig combed out again;—and to-morrow, you know, is Sunday."

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